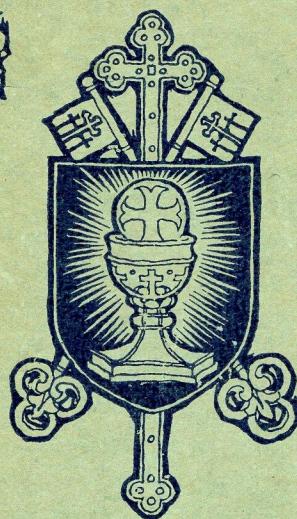


# The Science of Prayer

By ERNEST WOOD



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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

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This booklet is the outcome of a series of Addresses delivered by the author in St. Alban's Liberal Catholic Church, Sydney, during the year 1925. Some of the instructions in concentration and meditation that he gives here are adapted from his book on *Concentration*, which is said to have had a circulation of a quarter of a million in various languages. Professor Wood was till lately Head of the Sind National College, Hyderabad Sind, India, whence he came to Sydney in the course of a five years' world lecture-tour. He has been given the highest honours by the Hindus for his promotion of Sanskrit learning.

In *The Science of Prayer* Professor Wood makes an interesting contribution to Liberal Catholic thought, linking up the ceremonial worship of the Church with the immemorial Eastern methods of Yoga, and welding his material into a Manual which should prove of the utmost value to members of our Church.

## CHAPTER ONE—VARIETIES OF PRAYER

### § 1.—The Call of Our Time

WE live in an age that calls for firm decision. Life is no longer mapped out for each one of us by our forerunners, as it was a century ago, when all that a man or a woman had to do was to live gracefully in that sphere to which, as it was expressed, it had pleased God to call her or him. Now each one of us is faced with a great variety of possibilities in life, and must decide for himself what he will do with his energy and time, what he will make of himself, what course in life he will follow.

This is true in every field. The schools and colleges offer to our youth a great variety of choice of lines of study and training. In business there are literally thousands of occupations in these days when, for example, even the tempering of a particular brand of steel to be used in some small part of a motor-car is a profession in itself. And in private life in hours of leisure, which are more numerous than formerly, many are the opportunities for study, travel, amusement and self-culture. In all these matters he who has made no decisions, who has elected to follow no definite road, drifts hither and thither towards an old age filled chiefly with disappointments and regrets.

### § 2.—Religion as a Science

Amid all these decisions none is more vital than that which answers the question, "What part shall religion play in my life?" Many say that they do not need it, because they can follow truth and goodness without its aid, and they feel sure under those circumstances that the future may be trusted to take care of itself. They do not realise that religion is a science.

Religion tells of the laws of life, just as chemistry deals with the laws governing the relations between atoms and molecules, and just as the latter science has enabled mankind to produce many materials and objects of great use and beauty, so can the former enrich and enlarge all the relations between man and man, and between man and the heart of the world, which is God, and produce in time a new humanity beside which our old one will look beyond all imagining archaic.

The best forms of religion have always called for our allegiance to certain spiritual laws, which were undoubtedly as clear as the noonday sun to the vision of

the prophets and teachers who formulated them, though they are but dimly felt by other men. They have said: "Live pure, speak and think true, love your fellow-beings as yourself, and follow the King of the World."

When people have practised these things, have obeyed these laws, they have found their value—but never otherwise. Till secular science adopted the motto of truth, no great structure of knowledge was erected in our civilisation; before that time men used to write fanciful natural history, geology and astronomy, half in the nature of the modern novel. Till men did their best, with truth in thought and honesty in work, never content with anything less, they produced no great machines or books or buildings. The pursuit of truth has produced fruits of great power and plenty in modern human life, and thus one department of religion, that is, faith in truth, has justified itself in practical life. What it has done at the same time in developing the mind and will of man we cannot estimate.

### § 3.—The Law of Love

Christ called men to the same kind of faith, but in love. He taught the most intensely practical science of life. What trust in thought and truth has done for us in the sphere of power, placing man's life in harmony with the great forces and laws of the material world, which are invisible but real, so trust in love, the cultivation of happy and generous feelings towards all, will undoubtedly produce harmony in the world of man, and release for the service of mankind all the forces and laws of brotherhood. But faith must come first, because the power of God works through us from within, and our salvation is not to be imposed upon us or thrust into us from the outside of our bodies.

That brotherhood is full of power may be seen in a variety of ways, even at our present early stage of its development. An idea worked out by one man becomes of benefit to many thousands, as, for example, that which led Elias Howe to the invention of the sewing machine, Crompton to the production of the spinning machine, or Edison to the discovery of the means of sending a number of telegraphic messages along one line at the same time. Thirty men on a farm may in these days produce enough food for many thousands; a comparatively few people in one modern factory can manufacture an amount of cloth formerly turned out by ten thousand expert hand-loom workers, and in a state of brotherhood something of the work of thousands may flow back to them, in all the most perfect inventions and products of modern skill and art. Let men work in harmony, giving

and taking, and this brotherhood will multiply the fruits of human labour a thousand times. It is impossible to prophesy the glorious structure of human society and its power to enrich and elevate the human soul that will sooner or later be ushered in by this department of faith.

#### § 4.—The Law of Devotion

Devotion to God is a part of this science. It is easy for us to become like that which we see, and if men do not quickly become godlike it is chiefly because their eyes are yet dim to spiritual things and laws. Sometimes the sight of a glorious piece of natural beauty can open a new window in the soul, through which the creative sunshine of the spiritual world enters the heart; and touches it with the ecstasy of true life. Sometimes the sight of a noble character or an heroic and unselfish deed can give a thrill that takes us out of our lower selves into a better Self where all is light. Well did Sir Alfred Russel Wallace put it: "The love of truth, the delight in beauty, the passion for justice, and the thrill of exultation with which we hear of any act of courageous self-sacrifice, are the workings within us of a higher nature which has not developed by means of the struggle for material existence."

The fact is that God is everywhere, and the devotion that these great things awaken in us may rise even at the sight of one little leaf, when we have learned in some happy moment the secret of His presence. It is part of the science of religion to enable us to take hold of our best moments and stretch them over the hours, the days and the years, until our lives become filled with the everlasting light.

#### § 5.—Two Kinds of Prayer

Religion being thus the science of the soul of man, what shall we say of prayer? The word came originally from the Latin **precarī**, which meant to entreat or beg, and nothing more than that; but it has gradually changed, thanks to the occasional pure devotees who have graced the pages of religious history, until it has come to have in addition a nobler meaning.

There are really two distinct kinds of prayer—the prayer of fear and the prayer of union. Those who fear do not know God, but they have made some image of their own to which they have attached the name. For some of them God is a terror. They are like the inhabitants of some primitive and remote villages, who put offerings of animals, and even, it is said, sometimes of children,

outside the stockade, in order to appease the appetite of the jungle tiger, which might otherwise enter the village by night or even by day. For others God is a great power residing quite outside the ordinary course of things, to whom they may appeal for intervention amid the difficulties and dangers of life; these are asking for bodily safety and comfort. For a third class of people, God is a power to whom they may pray for inward strength to endure or to conquer the difficulties and troubles of the world; they do not feel that He meets them in all things. All these are prayers of fear, due to the conception of God as not ever-present in His world.

### § 6.—Prayers of Union

The prayers of union may also be classed as of three kinds. First comes the prayer of those who realise that the world is God's field of evolution for man. We might call it God's school for man, always remembering that it is even more than the most ultra-modern school devoted to the cultivation of character and the development of the powers of consciousness, of will and love and thought, of its pupils, than to mere instruction with regard to things or facts. God's world is a changing world—in which the human soul may undergo a definite phase of development that may rightly be called evolution or progress. Man does not live in this world without himself becoming a little more like the best kind of God that he is able to imagine.

To realise that God has a plan of progress for humanity, and to work for that among the people whom we contact, is a form of prayer. It is doing along with God what He does; it is putting ourselves under His law. It is said that God is all-powerful, all-knowing and ever-present. Man is to some extent powerful, knowing and present. Therefore man is part of Him, and his work for Him in accordance with His law is prayer of the hands and feet as well as of the mind and lips.

### § 7.—Aspiration

A second form of prayer of union is aspiration. It is an unfathomable instinct in man to desire a fuller life. Some seek it in power and wealth and fame, but others obtain it through a generous sympathy which adds the life of others to their own. The man who knows what love is does not desire possessions for himself; he can even more enjoy the happiness of others who have them. He thus shares a little more of the life of God who is one with all; he feels the ecstasy

of that, and his aspiration is a constant desire to enter more and more into the joy of the Lord, since the welfare of others is the very fount of his desire.

### § 8.—**Thanksgiving**

The third form of the prayer of union is the ecstasy of thanksgiving. The true devotee feels God's love in the world. Just as a scientist would say that there is no particle of matter that is free from the laws of nature, but that there is system and order in everything, so this devotee declares that there is no circumstance or event in life that does not contain God's love, leading man to perfection and happiness. "Away with personal likes and dislikes," he says, "Why should I say that this is good because I like it, and that that is bad because I do not? My pleasure and pain give no true judgment of the value of things; but there is unspeakable delight and endless profit when the love of God is seen everywhere, and all is accepted for use as from His hand." We have many examples in history of the religion of these people who accepted all of life, who were perfectly delighted with it, full of thanksgiving, full of aspiration to feel it more and more, full all the time of the feeling of the presence of the Divine. Such people are willing to accept the world which God has made, to make the fullest use of it, to acknowledge Him in that world, to keep in touch with the inner world as well as with the outer—in brief, they seek to live life as fully and as well as it can possibly be lived.

The prayer of such a devotee is perpetual thanksgiving; and it is part of his reward that things lose much of their ability to wound, and what would give intense pain or sorrow to others has little power to hurt or harm this man. He does not need the lessons of pain, because he is eagerly absorbent of those of love. In him perfect love has cast out fear.

### § 9.—**Collective Prayer**

All the above forms of prayer may be either individual or collective. Some primitive peoples gather together to ward off imaginary dangers—for example, at the time of an eclipse, when whole villages sometimes turn out and beat drums and make the most terrible noises that they can in order to frighten away the demon whom they suppose to be in the act of swallowing the sun. People also gather together to pray for rain in times of drought, or for some abatement of it in time

of flood, or, on both sides of a battle, for victory over the enemy. These primitive supplications irresistibly remind one of the Japanese proverb:

The farmer prays for rain;  
The washerman for sun;  
If prayers were not in vain,  
The world would be undone.

But people combine also for the prayers of union with God in His work, and this we see in the services of the Liberal Catholic Church, and other similar religious organisations. Often one hears the clergy and laity of the Church allude to these services as "our work" or "the Church work." The term "work" is appropriate, because something is being done with intention. Work is a form of activity peculiar to man. Things can move and be moved; animals perform actions; but man works—his actions are done with a purpose.

### § 10.—The Power of Thought

Modern psychological knowledge makes it easy for us to realise in what ways the rituals and devotions of the Church are both work and service. In these days quite a good deal is known about the influence of our thought upon our minds and bodies, and also upon our surroundings and our neighbours. This is not the place to enter upon a long argument with respect to these things; but it may be said that in the Liberal Catholic Church, and among many votaries of other churches, the devotion and ritual of religion are beginning to have new interests and command new respect and attention because they are seen to embody the use of forces which have for long been unrecognised in Christendom. It will be sufficient to summarise these things.

Our habit of thought unquestionably develops our character. What we shall be in mind next week and next year depends upon what thoughts our mind dwells upon to-day and to-morrow. Many men stand at a fork in the road of life in this respect. Let them take the bend to the right, and choose good thought, and later on they will be men of fine character; let them turn the other way and harbour unkind or unclean thoughts, even in a small measure, and they have taken the left-hand path, and will perhaps find themselves in later life weak and dissolute characters, having gained little treasure from their life for the permanent use of the soul. Like the "just one drink more, only one" of the tippler is the one unworthy

thought that is sometimes indulged in the life of the mind. But there is a positive side also to this. Thought can be made a definite instrument for the building up of a strong and beautiful character, a work as definite as that of architect and builder in the erection of a house.

The influence of the state of mind upon the body is also beginning to be well known. A youthful mind keeps the body young; one that dwells upon age and decrepitude wears it out before its time. Cheerfulness and depression do not merely modify the features, so that two faces having originally a similar landscape may come to differ as the Grampians in a storm from the gardens of Ceylon, but they also act upon the entire body through the nerves and glands. In the background of the mind, often beyond the sight of consciousness, old thoughts of yesterday or yesteryear still linger, and predispose the body to disease or health, to weakness or strength.

Beyond that, the minds of men communicate constantly in an untutored way. As the radio message is sent thousands of miles through the invisible atmosphere, and is taken up by every instrument that is in tune with its vibrations, so does the mind of man send out all round him, and especially to those of whom he is thinking, messages which tend to stir other minds into similar activity. Just as the person whose clothing or dwelling is unclean is a source of physical danger to the health of others, so is the person whose mind is impure or basely selfish a danger to the mental and emotional health of many other people. This telepathy is universal. Often sensitive persons are aware of the feelings and thoughts of others; we stand and talk together, but behind each of us Jove nods to Jove, as it has been expressed.

This thought-power is a real force, as definite as electricity, which also is invisible and was for a long time unknown. In Church work it may be a greater power than in individual life and may do very definite work, because many people are thinking and feeling together. I know very well a group of people who determined to find out the truth about telepathy. They decided for their first experiment to form what was called a battery of minds. These people met together in a room. In turn each one of them was blindfolded, while all the others concentrated their thought upon a simple object and tried to transmit it to his mind. Such was the effect of their combined thought that at their first meeting they had a large percentage of successful transmissions, and some of the people were able to receive the thought correctly nearly every time.

A few hundred people in a church, thinking together, form a tremendously powerful battery of minds. Physical instances of the power of such combined

action are numerous. For example, when a captain leads a company of soldiers across a bridge, he commands them to break their regular step, for all the feet coming down together and in rhythmic repetition might set up such a vibration as to shatter the structure. In the old-fashioned battering-ram of the American Indians is to be seen an example of something done by a number of people acting together, which would be impossible for a far greater number acting separately. Perhaps twenty Indians would pick up a great log of wood and carry it forward to break in the door of a house, but if the persons within could manage to shoot down just a few of them, the log would fall to the ground, the others being unable to sustain its weight.

### § 11.—The Cumulative Effect

There is still another source of great strength in the services of the Church. They have been so arranged that the greater part of this thought-force is intended to accumulate until a critical moment is reached, at which it is released like an arrow from a bow, to go forth into the world and carry new hope and courage and consolation and peace and every such good thing to the minds of thousands of people in the neighbourhood of the church.

### § 12.—The Use of Ritual

Students of the ritual add more even to this, and declare that not only the priests and the congregation are engaged on these occasions, but that invisible helpers also share in the work, with a power far greater than man's.\* It should not be difficult to realize that such a service gives a special opportunity for the working together of beings in the inner and the outer worlds, quite apart from what may be called the magic of the ritual itself. Surely under such circumstances each devotee, performing the prayer that is work, makes himself far more than at ordinary times a channel for superhuman forces.

Many people have felt the thrill of these things, and at times have become highly conscious that there is pouring through them a power far greater than their own. One may perhaps use for this the simile of an electrical transformer. Electric power is carried for hundreds of miles from a generating station on the side of a great waterfall to the city where it must do work. It is borne along the cables at very high pressure, which would burn up the instruments and wire for lighting and

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\*See "The Science of the Sacraments," by Bishop Leadbeater.

other purposes were it turned directly into them, so it is carried first into a transforming station, where it issues through the transformers in a great volume of useful electric current at low pressure.

The man or woman whom devotion has developed spiritually may very well receive into himself great forces of thought-power which would be too much for others, and then through him they may be transformed and may go out to the world, added to such thought-power as he may be able to generate himself. And he, like every other person in the congregation, is probably able under the stimulus of the occasion to think with greater power than at other times. The conventional attitude of prayer and the beautiful sounds and forms and motions or gestures all play their part. Just as a person far from home wishing to think of a loved one whom he has left behind may intensify his imagination with the aid of a photograph or even some small memento, so, but more so, may the devotion and thought-power of the devotee be stimulated during the church work.

It will be seen, then, that the term "service" is very appropriate. There is real service of man, and of God as well. It is not assumed that we can do anything to serve God directly, but in the prayer of aspiration and of thanksgiving, when men open their hearts to Him, and accept the world of our education in the spirit in which He has given it to them, they are furthering His plan, and so are serving Him.

### § 13.—God's Work is also Play

There is something perhaps just a little unsuitable about the use of the word "work" in this connection, although it so vividly asserts that something definite and purposeful is being done. It certainly should not be drudgery or labour, but ought to be what work is to the artist or the scientist—a delight, a play, a joyous exercise of the functions of life. Indeed, some religious people have suggested that God does not work, but that He plays. Were our physical business properly organized all our work would be of this character. There is no essential difference between work and play. It is play as long as you have not to exert your power against your will or beyond the point of fatigue.

I might use to illustrate the meeting-point of work and play the cross-word puzzles which have caught the public imagination and are giving a sort of pleasure to some millions of people. There are reasons for their popularity. One is that they provoke a little mental activity, where without them there might be none—and that is a matter of delight because it gives a feeling of increased life. A second

reason is that the effort is supported all the time by the external aid of the printed form, and there is no call for sustained or complicated mental effort or memory. For the same reason many people are able to have some thoughts during conversation or argument who find their minds barren in the privacy of their own rooms. A third cause is to be seen in the wave of thought that has been propagated in the atmosphere and sweeps many minds before it. The human mind is greatly influenced by such waves, which are seen again in the way in which people follow the fashions—which look beautiful while they last, because the thought of the time emphasizes some particular item of beauty, to the neglect or even the destruction of other forms. These things come in waves; soon the cross-word puzzle will pass away from our midst, as the picture puzzle has done, and something else will take its place, and appeal to man because of its union of play and work.

To accept the Church work as play and yet as service takes away all strain of effort, and so far from diminishing the effectiveness of the work, it increases the power of devotion and thought. It is a bad tradition that associates gloom and sorrow with religion, and those who know anything of the working of these things realize that the atmosphere of the service should ever be one of bubbling delight, of expansion of heart and mind, of strength and triumph and the joy of victory.

## CHAPTER TWO—IMAGINATION

### § 1.—The Imagination Required

**C**ONSIDER what happens when an organist is playing. Each time that he touches a key, a note instantly bursts forth from the organ. Just so each time that a person hears or reads or speaks or thinks a word, a great thought, clear and bright, ought to swell up in his mind. But does it? In most cases, it is to be feared, that organ is a feeble, toneless thing; but even when it has some voice it is like an instrument in which many of the notes are broken and soundless and others are out of tune.

That is not the sort of mind with which good prayer can be performed, whether in private or in the collective form of a Church Service. Worship depends upon our thoughts as much as upon our feelings; you cannot have a glorious conception of the Divine Being, capable of rousing a lofty grade of emotion, unless the mind presents a high and living conception of Divinity. But with practice anyone may so train his imagination that at each word, or idea embodied in words, a real thought springs into life, to irradiate the mind and to go out in service into the world. There is as much difference in this respect between the common condition of man and what it ought to be and can be, as there is between the occupation of collecting and sorting rags and that of joy-riding in an aeroplane.

### § 2.—The Work of the Congregation

It has been explained in the Liberal Catholic Church that the thoughts of the congregation are sometimes more useful than those of the celebrant, because the latter is largely occupied with his physical manipulations and precise forms of words. The members of the congregation therefore have a responsible task, which may also be an enjoyable one. Let them use the imagination, filling the Church with devotional thought and feeling, and ticking off, as it were, each thought that is contained in the priest's utterance and giving it vivid life on the mental plane. Let us take for example the **Confiteor**. The priest says:

O Lord, Thou hast created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of Thine own eternity; yet often we forget the glory of our heritage, and wander from the path which leads to righteousness. But Thou, O Lord, hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are ever restless till they find their rest in Thee.

'Thou' should call up a sudden and vivid picture representing our conception of the Divine. The word is gone in an instant, but that is no reason why our thought should not be as vivid as a flash of lightning, and should not light up the mind as such a flash does the darkness of the night. 'Hast created'—there are two pictures there. 'Man'—how many people know what is meant by that word? Knowing or not, let us make the best picture we can. 'To be'—there are several thoughts in this. 'Immortal'—another great thought. And so on, not only through the whole **Confiteor**, but throughout the greater part of the service.

### § 3.—New Interest in the Ritual

This use of the imagination, or rather the image-making faculty of the mind, will also give new interest to the ritual. Each bit of it is likely to become a subject of private consideration when this method is practised, and that cogitation will throw new light upon the proceedings in the Church. And thus one will find oneself going through the service not in the spirit of a person who has boarded a train at New York, and whose only interest is the end of the journey in San Francisco, nor in that of a person who has taken up a book to read and is intent upon reaching the end of it, so that he can say, "Well, that is done; I have read that book," but in the spirit of one who finds the journey so full of interesting incidents, the book so abundant in ideas, that he comes to the end unexpectedly, and with some pained surprise, and wishes there were more.

### § 4.—Imagination Proper

Sometimes one may use the imagination not simply to tick off the ideas as they are spoken, but to imagine a great act taking place, as in the Absolution, when one may think of a huge comb of fire as being drawn through the congregation, bringing all the thoughts and feelings of the people into harmony or into line with the great purpose of the undertaking in which they are engaged. We may think of sin not as things done or undone contrary to spiritual law, but as that state of mind in which its powers are wrongly turned, away from love and truth and courage, into channels of selfishness, thoughtlessness and idleness, which are the source of every sort of sin or crime. Thus the Absolution can be thought of as combing out this tangle of cross purposes. Or it can be thought of as like the action of a large magnet passed over a great number of scraps of iron, converting them all into little magnets, and drawing them into line with itself.

### § 5.—What not to Picture

It is not necessary for me to enter into any further detail of the Service, except to say that there are some things with respect to which one does not try to make a picture of what happens. Readers of Bishop Leadbeater's **The Science of the Sacraments** will remember, for example, that when the **Kyrie** is being sung or recited certain spire-like forms are being erected in the subtle atmosphere. It is not necessary to think of that effect, which works on its own account; but it is necessary to pour forth thanks and aspiration in the most vivid manner all through that recitation, for that will provide much of the material from which the building is constructed.

Analogous to this are many of the operations in mental healing. If, for example, there were something wrong with the heart, and you wished to use your thought-power for its correction, you would not try to picture a perfect heart in your imagination; in all probability if you did so, with such imperfect knowledge of that organ as most of us have, you would be more likely to create new forms of disorder than to produce any improvement. In such a case you would think of health with respect to that part of the anatomy, and leave it to the healing forces of the body, which are constantly carrying on their business more or less imperfectly quite outside the range of our conscious knowledge, to direct themselves to the benefit of the heart. A great part of the effect of our thought in such cases goes to remove the obstacles to health which tend to fill our minds sub-consciously, and so let the perfectly natural healing forces do their work without misdirection or impediment.

### § 6.—Imagination in Reading

There are many ways in which we may develop the imagination, so as to make the mind more alive. In reading a novel, for example, one may tick off the ideas and make concrete and vivid pictures of every detail that happens. It will, of course, take us somewhat longer than usual to read the story in this way, but after a little practice of this kind one is pleasantly surprised to find with what astonishing rapidity the mind can work without loss of clarity or fulness of vision. If the book says that Lord Algernon Fitznoodle stepped into his limousine, we may, if we like, dress him either in the most immaculate fashion from eyeglass to spats, or in that careless abandon calculated to cause the passer-by to offer him sixpence to carry his bag (both extremes are in vogue in the literature of the

moment), or closer to reality, if we happen to know what that is; but we must make a real living man, and he must step, not jump, or hop, or just fade, into the limousine, and that also should be what the word implies. And so through the whole story. That sort of reading in which one is gulping down the story, only anxious to come to the tit-bit near the end, is as ruinous to mental tone as the practice of careful imagination is beneficial.

### § 7.—Use all the Senses

It is a defect of our present condition that we use the mind mostly in connection with the sense of sight. We thus literally make mental pictures, with only colour and form, when we ought to be making panceptions. I am afraid that is a new word, and a particularly hybrid one at that, but some such is needed to indicate a mental figure full of every sort of sense-perception—hearing, touch, taste and smell (whenever these are appropriate), as well as sight. If you think of an orange, for example, you should have some sense not only of its spherical form and reddish-yellow colour, and its inside as well as its outside appearance, but also of its weight in the hand, of its smooth roughness or irregular smoothness (whichever way you like to regard the matter), and of its peculiar taste and smell. You should seem to feel and smell and taste the orange, not merely to see it.

We will say nothing of hearing in this particular case, although physicists may assert that since the particles of an orange, like those of every other body, are in constant motion, they may be the cause of sounds, which do not happen to affect our ears. That such unheard sounds exist is a fact. There is a certain kind of whistle with which the well-known breed of German police-dogs (and perhaps other dogs also) can be called. When you blow upon this instrument neither you nor anyone else can hear the slightest sound, but the dog in another room, or at some distance, will instantly prick up his ears and come leaping and bounding to the exact spot where what is presumably the sound originated. Perhaps there is something after all in the old saying that if you want to catch a rabbit you must go into a field, hide behind a hedge, and make a noise like a turnip! Still, we need not go into such subtleties in our exercise of the imagination.

Then, again, there is a tendency to make mental pictures quite stationary, without their having even the merit of being statuesque. They are too much like the pictures of the old magic lantern or stereopticon, and not sufficiently like those

of the modern cinematograph. Let still things be positively still, and moving things be definitely moving—as trees, for example, whose leaves and branches may be moving in the wind, as fishes swimming and birds flying and persons walking and talking, and a little river running along with pleasant tinkling sounds and glancing lights.

### § 8.—The Use of Symbols

There is a great use also in symbols as a stimulus to the imagination, as well as a factor in the magic of ritual. An ancient use of these is related of certain Greek celebrities. One of them, called upon to make a speech touching upon government, finance, the navy, and several other topics, first pictured a crown to represent government, a coin for finance, a ship for the navy, and so on, and imagined these as placed about the familiar entrance to his house—as we might put the crown on the mat, the coin on the hat-rack in the hall, and the picture of a ship on the wall a little further on. Thus he remembered perfectly easily and in good order what he had to talk about, and the symbols, being familiar, quickly awoke in his mind the facts he wanted to use. So in the Church the Cross should remind us better than any words of the sacrifice of the Master, and the sacrifice of universal life in the great sea of matter. Similarly, the triangle recalls the Trinity, the three powers of consciousness (will, love and thought), and the three qualities of matter (substance, energy, and natural laws); the five-pointed star tells of the perfected five-fold man (physical, emotional, mental, ethical, and spiritual); and the seven candles indicate the seven Spirits before the Throne, the seven Rays of Life, and the seven principles of being.

### § 9.—The Principle of Beauty

It is a tendency of our time to think that what is big is better than what is small, that what is loud is superior to what is soft, and that a great number of things are preferable to a few. But a little experience and observation belies this common assumption. To cite an instance, after residing in India for several years and becoming familiar with the delicate melodies of that land, I have never been able to readjust my ear to the dreadful clashes of western classical music. Especially is this principle evident in the domain of art. A mass of beautiful pictures and objects of vertu crowded into one room produces a hideous result, as they all strike the eye at once, reminding one of a photographic plate that has been exposed for a snap-shot two or three times by mistake. Let me quote in this

connection from the life of Madame Calvé, the famous singer. She speaks of an experience in Japan:

Near Nagasaki I had the interesting experience of living for over two weeks in a Japanese family to which I had been introduced by one of my American friends. The head of the family was a Buddhist priest, who, with his sister and his sister's children, lived within the confines of the ancient temple which he served. His sister offered me the hospitality of a real Japanese house. My room was simply furnished with a mat and one or two cushions. In one corner of it stood a low tea-table. That was all. At night I was given some larger cushions, over which, as a concession to my Western habits, linen sheets were spread. The paper screens were drawn together and I was *chez moi*!

The nieces of the priest spoke French and used to come to me every morning with flowers and gifts. They taught me how to "compose" a bouquet and to express an idea or a sentiment with one or two flowers carefully arranged. A certain blossom placed in a given relation to another meant a definite phrase. These young girls were able to paint their poets' verses in the colours of the fragrant flowers.

Each morning they brought me the *bibelot*, or ornament, which was to grace my room for that day. Sometimes it was a figure of Buddha, made a thousand years ago; sometimes a lovely vase or a gorgeous bit of carved jade. They would place it carefully on my table and we would admire it from every angle.

Once they showed me the storeroom where all their treasures were kept. "Why do you hide away all these beauties?" I exclaimed. "They could be put in every room of the house, so that you could enjoy them all the time."

"What a horrible idea!" they answered. "Positively barbarous! How dreadful to have all these things around us! In the first place it would be unhealthy. But most of all, we would soon become so accustomed to them that we should cease to enjoy or even to see them. Isn't it much better to take them out one at a time, to study them individually and appreciate all their delicate beauty and charm? That is the only way you can really enjoy a work of art."

In this Japanese method the principle of repetition is also employed, for the object standing alone acts upon us again and again until it is exchanged for something else, and we are rather in the position of one studying over and over a few verses of poetry, instead of reading page after page. Such a system of repetition in the prayer and service of the Church is employed to produce permanent effects.

### § 10.—Become as a Little Child

The habit of much careless reading tends to destroy an imagination that was often quite strong in our youth, such as is often seen in children, and in some

Oriental people who do not read much but meditate a great deal. I once knew a Chinese doctor who told me what was the greatest pleasure of his life. In his leisure hours he would lie back in his armchair and imagine that he was in heaven; and apparently the vision was so vivid to him that it was almost as good as if he were really there.

I recollect also a little story anent the children. Two little girls were talking together about what they would do when they grew up. One said, "I am going to be a mother, and I shall have a lot of children."

The second little girl, who had evidently not been brought up in quite the best way, said: "And I am going to be a school mistress, and your children will come to my school. And I shall smack 'em, and smack 'em, and smack 'em," she added, with great gusto.

The first little girl burst into tears.

"Oh, you horrid thing," she said. "What have my children done to you that you should hit them like that?" In the vividness of her imagination she had forgotten that the children did not yet exist.

I seem to have departed somewhat from the subject of the Church Service. But not really so. When we form part of the congregation let us remember to add the fruits of a vivid imagination to the rich imagery of the ritual, add the brightest colours of our minds to the blaze of rich form and sound that with its beauty stirs the worshipper to hearty service and exalted work.

## CHAPTER THREE—CONCENTRATION

### § 1.—Concentration and Prayer

**A** VERY important part of the Science of Prayer is meditation. Success in meditation presupposes some practice of concentration. Such practice also strengthens every faculty of the mind, and teaches one how to use its power with great effect, so it is a great aid to all the forms of prayer that we have been considering, as well as in daily life, where full attention to the business in hand always makes for successful work and thought.

### § 2.—How to Begin

Concentration is the narrowing down of the field of mental vision, so that all the light of consciousness is focussed on a chosen object for some time. Generally people find that the mind is rather a wandering thing, but the fact is that it is the attention that wanders among the things of the mind. Sit down quietly, close your eyes, and make a mental picture of some simple object, such as a silver coin. Let your mental eye observe its pattern or design, and dwell upon it for three minutes. Probably long before that time has elapsed you will find that you are thinking about something totally different, and have forgotten about the coin. This is a common experience, and it leads people to say that concentration is difficult. Still, it is not as difficult as it seems, and success in it may be attained by a little regular practice and the right attitude of mind. The following suggestions will help:

### § 3.—Hints on Concentration

First, always remember to concentrate quietly. Nervous and muscular tension, such as is involved in contracting the brows and clenching the jaws and fists, is not necessary for concentration; in fact it is an obstacle to it, and is also injurious to health. It is no sign of concentration or of thinking; but rather of inability in that direction. The same thing is seen when a little child is making efforts to learn to write. It will not only grasp the pencil too tightly, but in trying to make the form with its hand it will also put out its tongue, twist its legs around the chair legs, and contort itself in various other ways, so that it becomes tired in a short time. Those who know Rodin's famous statue "The

Thinker" will recollect that it presents a man resting his set jaw upon his fist, and his elbow on his knee, in a great state of tension. That depicts not really a thinker, but one who is trying to think and cannot. It is best before attempting concentration to see that the body is relaxed, especially the brow, the neck and the eyes. With this precaution, no one need fear that concentration will produce headaches or similar troubles.

Secondly, the emotions should be similarly relaxed. It is quite probable that during the practice any causes of worry that there may be will assert themselves more than at other times, and cause the mind to seem to become even more restless than usual. To fight against these things during the time allotted to the practice tends to strengthen them. The best way to avoid this trouble is to notice them with indifference. You suddenly remember something that some one said or did that annoyed you, and it begins to rankle. When it first appears it will probably be not in the centre of the stage, but just coming on. You have not lost sight of the chosen object of concentration, but the other intrudes. The formula to employ in this case is simply, "I don't care." You just say to yourself, "Oh, there is that old worry about so-and-so. Well, I don't care. Let it come or go; I am not interested in it just now." If you treat it in this way it will fade away unnoticed. There is no need, either, to worry that it should be there, since as long as your chosen object remains the central figure on the stage, the presence of other things does not matter.

It is useful to say also to oneself, just before beginning the practice, "I am going to give five minutes to dwelling upon such and such a thing, and I need not worry during that time. There is plenty of time during the day for all the worrying that is necessary." One should, indeed, at some other time, attend to these intruders, so as not to leave the mind unsettled with respect to them. If it is a question of some decision that remains unsettled because the **pros** and **cons** are equal, or because you have not sufficient data for a decisive judgment, decide first of all as to whether a decision is necessary at once, and if it is not, set the matter aside; but if a decision is imperative toss up a coin and settle it that way. If the **pros** and **cons** are so equally balanced, it cannot matter much which way you decide, but it is important for the peace and strength of the mind that the matter should be disposed of.

Thirdly, do not attempt to **hold** the object with the mind. It is the mind that has to be held quietly poised upon the object. Sometimes there is the thought that the idea is fickle and that it will run away, and that leads to a

kind of tension of the mind itself. But for successful concentration it should dwell lightly upon the object, just as calmly as you would look at your watch to tell the time. No grasping is necessary; indeed, it tends to destroy the concentration, just as though one were to try to hold a handful of water with a tight grasp.

#### § 4.—The Use of the Will

It is really the will that controls the mind in this case, and the will is the quietest thing in the world. One must not say, "I wish to do this," or "I wish I could do it." One must just quietly do it. Wishing excludes willing. An instance of the way in which this works is often seen in the case of a person learning to ride a bicycle. He has perhaps reached the stage at which he can go along the road in an uncertain manner, and is practising on a quiet road, when he happens to see ahead of him a brick or a piece of stone that has fallen from a builder's cart. That frightens him. He begins to think a lot about the brick. He wants very hard not to run into that brick; yet he does it with quite admirable skill. His mind was full of the brick, and his hands followed his thought and guided him straight into it, though he was trying to make them steer away from it. He made the mistake of trying to control his hands instead of his thoughts. With a little effort of will, he could have turned his thought away from the brick and forgotten all about it, and filled his mind with a picture of that part of the road along which he wanted to go. That would have cost him no noticeable effort, if he had only known this simple matter. So also in concentration we must give up wishing, and substitute for it the quiet and gentle action of the will.

Since it is the mind that is to be held steady the object on which one practises does not matter. Any simple thing will do. Then, after a little practice, one will have the same experience mentally that one has physically when learning to swim. It may be that one has entered the water many times, only to sink again and again; but there comes an unexpected moment when you suddenly find yourself at home in the water. Thenceforward whenever you are about to enter the water, you almost unconsciously put on a kind of mood, and that acts upon the body so as to give it the right poise and whatever else may be required for swimming and floating. So in concentration the day comes when you find you have acquired the mood of it, and after that you can dwell on a selected object or subject of thought for almost as long as you choose.

## § 5.—The Benefits of Concentration

This faculty is most valuable. It is impossible to enumerate the ways in which it tones up the mind and makes for success in study, in business, in manual work that requires skill, in religious aspiration, and in every sort of mental work. It is a mood that one may impose upon the mind for a certain length of time, or until a prescribed mental task is accomplished. Thus a student thinking out some question, let us say in Geometry, if he can concentrate, will be able to keep to the point, to keep his thought turned in the direction of the solution, with his data fully in mind, instead of losing the thread again and again, whenever the mind like a wayward horse tries to escape into a side road where the going is easier. Thus also a man of science may keep his attention turned towards some problem that he has not been able to solve as yet, and his mood of concentration towards it will undoubtedly facilitate the coming of one of those flashes of inspiration which play so large a part in modern science and invention.

## § 6.—Confidence in the Mind

Confidence in oneself is a great help to success, especially when allied to some knowledge of the way in which thoughts work in the mind, and of the great fact that they exist there even when they are out of sight. Just as the working of hands and feet and eyes and every other visible part of the body depends upon inner organs of the body upon which we may completely rely, so do all the workings of thought that are visible to our consciousness depend upon unseen workings which are utterly dependable. A good memory rests largely on this confidence. I remember as a very small boy having been sent by my mother, on some emergency occasion, to purchase some simple thing such as soap or butter from a small grocer's shop about half a mile away from our house. She gave me a coin and also told me the name of the article. I had no confidence in the tailor's art, and certainly would not trust that coin to my pocket; I could not believe in such an important matter that the object would still be in the pocket at the end of the journey, so I held the coin very tightly in my hand, so as to feel it all the time. Similarly, I went along the road repeating the name of the soap or whatever it was, feeling that if it went out of my consciousness for a moment it would be entirely lost. I had no confidence in the pockets of the mind, although they are in fact even more reliable than those made by the tailor. Yet despite my efforts, or more probably on account of them, on entering

the shop and seeing the shopman looming up above me in a great mass, I did have a paralytic moment in which I could not remember what it was that I had to get.

This is not such an uncommon thing even with adults; I have known students who seriously jeopardised their success in examinations by exactly this sort of anxiety. But if one wants to remember, it is best to make the fact or idea quite clear mentally, then look at it with calm concentration for two or three seconds, and finally let it sink out of sight into the mind. You may then be quite sure that you can recall it with perfect ease when you wish to do so.

### § 7.—The Four Roads of Thought

Another great help to the practice of concentration comes from a little knowledge of the association of thoughts. I prefer to call these the roads of thought, because the mind follows certain tracks, which have no doubt been established partly by human habit and partly by natural law, along which thought easily travels when passing from one idea to another. For example, if you think of a cat, your mind may travel on perhaps to ideas of a dog and other animals, to parts of the cat such as its whiskers or claws, to some of its qualities, such as its softness and liteness, or to incidents in the lives of cats that you have known. It is not at all likely to bring before you mental pictures of office paste, roller skates, or the binomial theorem.

For our present convenience I may class these associations of thought in four divisions: (1) the relations between an object, the class to which it belongs, and other members of the same class, such as cat and animal and dog: (2) the relations between the parts of a thing, as, for example, the cat and its fur and tail, or a box and its lid and hinges; (3) the relations between an object and its qualities as, for example, an orange and its colour and form; (4) the familiar relations stamped upon the mind by vivid or repeated experience, as, for example, those connecting Napoleon and Waterloo, or pen and ink, or sunrise and daylight.

### § 8.—The Practice of Recall

Such elementary knowledge of the roads of thought can be used in a simple exercise that is most valuable both for the attainment of concentration and for the general brightening up of the mind. For this exercise select some common object such as a match box, and then say to yourself, "Now, I am going to think

of everything I can about that object before I turn my mind away to anything else, and I will do it systematically with the aid of the four roads of thought." First you take up the object and its class and other objects of the same class (road 1), and with your eye on the match box you think of the class "box," also of the larger class "receptacle," then you think of all the different kinds of boxes and receptacles that you can remember, and each for a moment stands in your imagination beside the match box for a fleeting comparison with it. Do not be satisfied with what the mind easily brings forward; spend some little time in trying to find more and more things. Secondly, take up the line of the relationship of parts (road 2). Think of the shape and size of the different sides of the outer and inner parts of the box, think of the way in which the paper is pasted on it, and of what is printed on the particular box you are thinking of. Thirdly, think of the qualities of the object (road 3). It will probably be a wooden box, although card boxes are used in some places for some kinds of matches. Fourthly, you will think of match boxes that you have known, or anything at all that has been vividly connected with a match box in your previous experience.

The chief point about this experiment is that all the way through it you should not lose sight of the match box. As you turn your attention to one thing after another, every time your mind returns instantly to the match box, and thus you set up a habit of recall, and a mood of concentration that you can put on at will. You are putting the new idea beside the object, not replacing that by it. One object may last for several practices.

Practise this for ten minutes every day for a month, and then ask yourself where you stand, without considering that matter in the meantime. The time will then be ripe to employ this method for more difficult and abstract subjects, such as the preparation of sermons, lectures or articles.

### § 9.—Fruits of the Practice

One great advantage of this exercise is that it enables you to think all round a subject, and also to warm the mind up to action. It helps the slow mind to bring forth its knowledge, and prevents the quick one from running away along one line of thought before it has considered every aspect of the subject—a common fault of brilliant thinkers. It also enables a student to dwell effectively upon the new ideas that he has to acquire in the course of his work, and puts his

new information into the mind in good relation to all his previous knowledge connected with the subject.

Clear ideas on any subject are not very common. Many a man does not know what sort of figures is on the face of his watch, whether there is or is not a seconds' hand, and what is the colour of the fingers, black or gold. A man can walk and run; ask him to imagine himself walking and running and then to tell you what is the difference between the two acts, and he will not usually be able to do so. But if he will do the two things, observing carefully what happens, he will soon find out that when he is walking there is always at least one foot touching the ground, but when he is running both feet are off the ground at the same time—a thing which he had never observed till concentration brought it to mind.

## CHAPTER FOUR—MEDITATION

### § 1.—What Meditation Is

**M**EDITATION begins where concentration ends. The purpose of concentration is to focus the attention upon a small field of mental vision, so that the light of consciousness may be as brilliant as possible. It is the opposite of diffusion, and is analogous to the fixing of a reflector around a light, as, for example, in a searchlight. Our consciousness is at its best during such concentration, and the practice of concentration tends to increase its quality or power.

Concentration involves contraction of the field of vision; but meditation involves its expansion. In concentration you gain clear vision; in meditation you keep that clear vision but extend it over a larger field or into depths and heights of thought which you have not been able to reach clearly before.

It may be said in a general way that the object of our being incarcerated in earthly bodies is to produce a kind of concentration. We are temporarily shut off from the light of other worlds and from the myriads of things in this world to which our senses are not adapted, with the consequence that what little experience we do obtain through these limited senses is strong and clear. It is analogous to the clear picture that is formed on the plate or film of a camera, into which only a limited quantity and range of light is admitted. To open up great clairvoyant and other such powers in the ordinary man would not enrich his life, but would only fill it with worse confusion than it already has. Let him become master of himself in the small region where he is ruler, and then the time will be ripe for a more expanded life.

Success in meditation therefore implies success in concentration and in those things which are necessary to that, namely, relaxation of the body, indifference for the time being to what is happening near at hand or far away or anywhere in the world, emotional calm, and gentleness of vision. The man concentrating, sitting in his chair perhaps, is practically asleep bodily, but his consciousness in the brain is more than ever wide awake. In meditation that wide-awake consciousness applies itself to the subject of thought.

Meditation is, however, the very opposite of going to sleep. It is a regular flow of thought about an object with regard to which one has no difficulty in

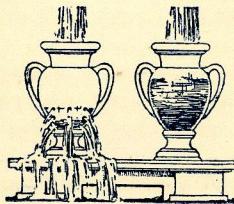
concentration. It is not like mind-wandering, in which the chain of thought leads over the hills and far away; it is not like worry, in which one arrives again and again at the same point, having travelled in a circle; it is a botanical ramble in elysian fields, where every flower contains the same sunlight created into form.

Sometimes, because of emotional attachment in the form of religious devotion, concentration is very easy, and meditation may be entered almost at once, as the vision roams about among the perfections of the Beloved, sees them as never before, watches their play in the varied events of life, and realises their utter beauty and the nectar that they bring for the sublime intoxication of the God-thirsty soul. At other times the concentration may be applied to the understanding of things and persons, so that the meditation will give inspiration, intuition and insight, and one sees the world and our doings in it from the standpoint of the indwelling life.

### § 2.—Meditation is Creative

Meditation is a great act of self-creation. The vivid consciousness obtained in concentration is an open door into the earthly mind from the positive spirit within us. Sometimes ignorant people seek in outward excitement the vividness of that real life, not knowing that the pleasures that they crave are nothing more than a temporary excitement of the body, the senses or the mind, not realising that all this is a sham from which the gilt must soon rub off, not the solid gold of real happiness.

The life that pours down in meditation is creative. Consider the following diagrams:



They represent the personal constitution of man, in which there are three levels, physical, emotional and mental. Diagram one shows the ordinary man. Physically he is restless and distracted by everything that touches his **senses**;

emotionally he has little self-control, so that the most trifling event can destroy his balance for a considerable time; mentally his life is almost without direction at all. The water pouring down from above represents the divine life; it is dissipated through the innumerable holes in the vessel, and cannot rise in level to any great height.

The second diagram shows the man of meditation. By concentration he closes up the holes. Then the water pouring into him in ever-increasing volume fills up the vessel constantly higher and higher; and that divine life does creative work up to the level which it has reached. Thus, a man in meditation may reach conceptions of duty, or beauty or truth, or the grandeur of noble character, loftier than any that he has attained before. And as he dwells upon them they work in him in a creative way, so that afterwards he will be able to reach their level with comparative ease.

### § 3.—Taking Something Up

Still, the object of meditation is not to bring something down into the lower self, for its satisfaction, but it is to take something up, to reach in your thought or feeling something that you have not touched before, and yet to carry up there the clearness of vision that was yours at the lower levels. The self that seeks only consolation for its troubles in life, or a pleasant emotional sensation of confidence in something higher than itself may have and enjoy its own meagre delights in an inferior sort of meditation that is hardly worthy of the name. Grateful and comfortable, he of this meditation is like a cat purring in a person's arms, enjoying the luxury of attention from a superior being. But meditation proper is for him who would ride through the world in a triumphant chariot of the soul's glory, for him who would expand his heart with love till it glows like the sun in all climes and places, for him whose eye would behold in a perpetual ecstasy of comprehension the all-comprising miracle of existence large and small. For such things the little self must let go its pleasures, which have no parity with the real happiness of true life.

### § 4.—Meditation and Experience

Meditation is one pole of our existence, which is all creative. Not by meditation alone will any one reach to the greatest heights. The limitations of external life contain God's teaching in equal measure. To look within and to seek without are the winter and the summer, the day and the night, the left and the right

foot of the soul's progress. Just as one who understands may be as thrilled with the beauty of a tiny leaf as with the magnificence of a tropical forest, so may one know that the finger of God is just as much in the small experiences that come to you and me as it is in the great occurrences that make landmarks in history. Our life swings between the inner and the outer poles. Inward thought devises a machine or propounds a theory; outward experience suggests improvements to that mechanism or declares the theory true or false. Consistency with the great laws of nature in their multifarious interplay, in other words unity with the archetypes, alone makes the thing useful or the theory true. We touch God at both poles. It was said that there is no bar or wall in the human soul where God the cause leaves off and man the effect begins; so it may be said that there is no point or place in space where our hand does not meet with His.

Meditation, therefore, is most effectual when its thoughts and emotions are carried out of the chamber into the affairs of life, there to receive correction and modification, there to have attached to them points of experience that will add to them new bloom and sister blossoms in future meditations.

### § 5.—Preliminary Meditations

Let me turn away from this attempt to describe what has never been described, and explain some simple practices that may lead up to these greater things.

First, there is the simple method of sparing a little time each morning or evening to turning over in the mind the events of the day, and thinking about them in a gentle manner. This is a great rest and recreation for the mind, emotions and body; it purifies and refines our lives, and digs and harrows the field, so that in it may grow the seeds dropped from a higher part of our being.

Secondly, there is the practice of reading well. It is best always to have on hand a good book, on philosophy or history or mathematics or any other subject, to which one can turn several times a week for mental recreation. There should be no thought of reaching the end of that book; it is just there for use. And the method of reading should be that in which one thinks first and reads afterwards. Pick up the book and observe what it is that you are coming to, spend ten minutes in reviewing your own knowledge and thoughts on that subject—even if you think you have none, you may engage in wondering about it—and then read for twenty minutes. Or, if you have only a quarter of an hour to spare, think for five minutes and read for ten. This puts the mental house in order, opens up

and tidies the most unused drawers and boxes, and prepares the mind for light as no other reading can.

### § 6.—The Building of Character

Thirdly, there is the practice of meditation for the realisation of virtues and the building of character. If men do not know what the dials of their watches look like, or what is the difference between running and walking, still less do they know what virtues and ideals are. People think that they know these things, and sometimes they sit down in meditation, and begin to repeat to themselves words like, "Courage, courage, courage; truth, truth, truth; kindness, kindness, kindness," and so forth, but almost as well may one spring from the earth and expect to arrive in heaven. To know what these are and to build them into character one must meditate properly.

Ideals are the guiding stars of our life, virtues are the lamps for our feet; ideals are the finished plan of our edifice, virtues are our working tools. We have to make our way across an unchartered sea, studded with a myriad rocks and islands, but far above and before us shines a great ideal—truth, goodness, beauty, harmony, freedom, unity, understanding—a galaxy of stars are there, one of which is especially the guide for each of us as he steers his solitary barque. Seldom even in the darkest night are the stars not visible to us, but often in our world their light is insufficient to show the obstacles in our course. Here comes in the function of the little lamps, lighted at our ideals, which we carry to find our way. Courage, kindness, devotion, determination, and many another are these virtues, without which our movements are like those of blind men on a dark night, whom neither light nor sight could profit.

### § 7.—Meditation on a Virtue

The way to meditate upon a virtue is simple. First of all make a concrete picture of the virtue in action. If it is courage, make several pictures representing that quality—perhaps a soldier rescuing a wounded comrade under fire; an invalid in pain and wretchedness, making little of his or her misery, so as not to share it with others; a person bound to some duty that is drudgery, but carrying it through cheerfully; an artist or poet who will not give up his love, regardless of the unkind face of fortune; a reformer whose talents might make him a shining light in politics were he to compromise, but he will not—such pictures should one

make, but let them be **panceptions**, clear and living, concrete and detailed, solid as a drama on a stage, not like a picture on a wall.

Having made the pictures, one may then meditate upon them. Concentrate on a picture, making it as vivid as possible, then go behind the appearance to try to feel the state of emotion of the hero in the picture; then try to realise the condition of his mind, the thoughts that are likely to occupy it—and when you have thus reviewed a number of pictures dealing with the same virtue, try to understand what it is that makes them all examples of courage. Finally, to build the quality into your own character, step up on to the stage, enter the body of the hero, and feel and realize the scene as a living incident in your own experience, resolving to be that character henceforth.

### § 8.—The Removal of Faults

Allied to the practice of building virtues into character is another one that aims at the removal of distinct defects. It is not generally useful to dwell upon one's faults; remorse takes hold of the sinner, and makes him into a miserable sinner, a misery to others as well as to himself. He who keeps his eye on what is good is likely to avoid the evil, and what there is of it in him will soon drop away. Still, there are sometimes particular and distinct faults with which one can deal in a surgical manner. Suppose that you are liable to sudden anger, which is a bad thing, even when there is what would commonly be called sufficient reason for it. Sit down and make a picture of some scene which has aroused or might arouse that anger. Picture the whole thing quite vividly—the cat upsetting the ink-pot on the best table cloth, your enemy speaking ill of you to some one whose opinion you value, or whatever it may be. Then make yourself act in that picture in exactly the opposite manner, sweetly and kindly, and resolve to live up to that should the occasion arise.

The method can be applied to all the emotions, for there is always a good one corresponding to each bad one. Thus fear may be replaced by admiration or gratitude, for if you have reason to fear anyone you have generally also reason to admire him; from him you can learn something, can get something you have not, and therefore there is occasion for gratitude. The lesson may be a painful one, but most of the pain will go out of it when it is taken in the right spirit. Similarly, the objectionable emotion of pride may be replaced by the good one of benevolence. All that you have to do in most cases to produce this transformation is to stop

thinking about yourself and to dwell instead upon the thought of how the world appears to the other person, and what has caused him to act as he did. As every bad emotion springs from thought of self, so does the thought of the outlook of others give birth to the good emotions.

### § 9.—Meditation on the Laws

Another preliminary meditation is that upon material and spiritual laws. There is, for example, the law of gravity. Knowing it, we should be fools indeed to jump downstairs instead of stepping, or to attempt to cross a river on our feet. There are the laws of health, governing sleep and work and the taking of food, and many other things; and here again we know that disobedience is foolishness, ruinous to health and happiness. If there are laws for the body, so are there spiritual laws for the soul, of which the voice of conscience occasionally reminds us. Those spiritual laws are interested in the whole of our life's journey, not only the bit of it that we know in our present bodies. Yet they are in no wise contrary to material ones, because at last our physical life has a spiritual basis. Honesty and truth-speaking, for example, build up social relations that rest upon our confidence in one another and lead to co-operation and prosperity. Meditation on the spiritual laws can polarise all our thoughts and emotions into line with them, and make our most common daily contacts with others a spiritual voyage instead of a material battle.

I have said little about meditation on things of the church, but after all that institution exists only for developing the true man in its members and, through them and its service, others in the outer world. It keeps before them the ideal and constantly trains them in the virtues. From any part of the ritual one may select subjects of meditation, and also even more of contemplation and worship.

## CHAPTER FIVE—CONTEMPLATION & WORSHIP

### § 1.—The Top of our Thought

**A**S concentration leads on to meditation, so does meditation lead on to contemplation, which may be defined as concentration at the top end of one's line of thought. Just as it is not well to begin meditation suddenly, but it is well to sit down and quietly bring the attention to the chosen subject, first of all thinking of a large scene and then narrowing down gradually to the special object, and then meditating upon it, so it is not well to end a meditation abruptly. At a certain point one must stop the flow of thought and dwell for a short time with clear-sighted and calm vision upon the best thing that one has been able to reach. It may be that you have reached a height or depth of thought beyond which you cannot go to any advantage. At this point your attention begins to waver, your mind begins to lose its hold. Do not then try to go further; do not desperately try to clutch or grasp that splendid conception or vision that is flickering just beyond your reach. Stop where you are and gaze contentedly at the highest you have been able to attain. That is contemplation.

### § 2.—Inspiration

It will often happen that this highest conception has not been the consecutive outcome of your meditative process, but while you were going on with that this thought that can irradiate the whole mind, or this great emotion that can give you a peace that does pass understanding, or this great vision of beauty or love or whatever it may be, such as you have not had before, bursts in upon you in a flash of inspiration. Then you may stop the meditation and give your whole attention to the contemplation of that greatest thing. Such contemplation creates a new platform on which your consciousness can stand, so that when you come round again to deal with that deepest thought you will find it easier to hold, and discover that your meditation can be carried further still.

It often happens in daily life that those who are given to the form of prayer that is meditation catch sudden glimpses of great truths, which carry with them some inexplicable evidence of their own accuracy, and one thinks them wonderfully simple, and says to oneself: "Now why on earth did I never think of that or hear about it before?" But beware; if you do not keep your attention on that

idea, simple as it is, it will be gone from you very soon and you will be unable to recover its message. It is, alas, true that you must imprison it in a form of words. Write it down and make it the subject of future meditation, not forgetting that the words are not the truth. In such a case the words may help you to recover the reality that you have seen, which is difficult to find in the great thoughts of others, buried as they are in books or speech, in words that can never say anything, but only suggest. A great truth put into words is like a bird kept in a cage; some like its song, but it has not quite the note of liberty, the quality of life.

### § 3.—Religious Contemplation

Contemplation is also seen in the worship that accompanies the prayer of thanksgiving. It is a faculty different from thought, different even from love; it is the little self finding itself in the greater self, as though the sun reflected in a pool of water should look up at the sun in heaven and feel a sudden liberation into that greater life. It has not lost itself; it has gained itself. This is the experience of man suddenly confronted with a realization of that which is utterly greater than he had thought. Then he forgets that which he used to call himself; the little mind has become one with the Universal Mind.

Some degree of this realization is present in all true devotion and worship. It is the opening up of a new faculty. With the physical body we contact the material things of the world; with our lower emotions we rejoice in their energy; with our mentality we come into touch with the material laws that govern all those things; with our higher emotions, our intuitional feelings, we become sensitive to the life in our neighbour, we become devoted to his welfare and happiness; but with this faculty of worship we come into contact with the One Self.

### § 4.—The Faculty of Worship

Emerson spoke of this faculty as the flowering and completion of human culture. On the tree of life it is not always the biggest branch that is the highest. At the animal stage of evolution we see that the emotional powers have been to some extent developed, and there is also a little growth of mind. At the ordinary human level that growth of mind has become dominant, and the man uses his judgment to select his desires, to decide which feelings he will keep in his mind and which he will set aside, but in him there is yet only a tiny appearance of the higher human emotion, the ethical instinct that can make him consider others as himself or even before himself. In the man of saintly type that ethical instinct

has grown till it overshadows the mentality and in him the mind is occupied only in planning for the service of that great human heart. But even he has still to develop to its full proportions another faculty—this realization of the divine self, the faculty of worship. It is something like the growth of those trees, such as the palm, which put out their new branches at the top; first you see but a tiny sprout, almost hidden among the sturdy fronds of earlier growth, but presently that little leaf has grown till it overshadows the rest of the tree. So in every man may this faculty, so small at present, gradually grow by use to be the greatest thing, and bring him to the perfection of human life.

The swiftness of its working is the perpetual miracle of this faculty. The devotee of beauty stands in rapt adoration before a glorious sunset, before the mountains in their strength, bearing on their heads their snowy symbols of purity, before a great canyon, a mighty waterfall, the raging typhoon—when he returns to the old small self he brings with him some of the beauty, the peace, the strength which he contemplated. To see God is to become Him. No one else hath seen Him at any time.

### § 5.—The Parable of the Birds

There is a kind of grace in this working. It is something for nothing; or it would be so were it not that we are sparks of the Divine, parts of that fire from which we receive our light and warmth. As the world helps us by supporting our feet, as the laws of nature give us great power when we co-operate with them with knowledge, so does God help us from within, and without that help a million efforts of ours would be in vain.

A beautiful story about this is told to children in India. It relates the history of a lapwing and his mate. The time had come for eggs to be laid, and as it is the way of those birds to make their nests on the ground, the twain were seeking a suitable spot. At last the lapwing pitched upon a place close to the seashore and said that this would do.

"I think not," said the mother bird. "It is very near to the sea, and I am afraid that our eggs might be washed away."

The father bird was as proud as ignorant, and at once he bristled up. "Do you think," he asserted, "that that stupid old ocean dare come and take my eggs away?"

Now, the story tells that the ocean became very angry when he heard these boastful words, and determined upon revenge. So, after the eggs had been laid,

he applied to the moon for help, and with her aid was able to reach up his arm, in the form of the tide, and sweep the eggs away under the water.

Then followed much reproaching by the lady bird, who told her husband exactly what she thought of his conceit. As we all know, this was not calculated to cure the fault; and in this case the lapwing became prouder than ever, and he said, "I will make the ocean give back the eggs."

So he went and called together all the other birds and told them what had happened, and proposed that they should join him in the task, which was to take the drops of water out of the ocean with their beaks and throw them upon the dry land, until the sea should be empty and they could recover the eggs from beneath it.

The birds laughed at his suggestion, but he said, "Well, never mind! I will do it alone." And he went and set to work, throwing out the drops one by one.

After some time some of the birds came to watch him, with growing curiosity and interest. They thought that there must be something in an idea which could make a bird work so diligently. And presently several joined him, and then others, and then more, and more, until at last all the birds were engaged in a great multitude, flying over the water and picking out its drops and putting them on the land.

That might have gone on for ever, had not something else happened. One day it came to the notice of the god of birds who sits up in the high heaven, waiting upon the god of men, that there was this great commotion among his people, so he came down to find out what was the matter, and all the sky was darkened by his wings, and flames of lightning sprang from his beak.

Then the ocean, looking up and seeing the coming of the lord of birds was terrified at what might happen, so he quickly pushed back the eggs on to the dry land. The sky cleared as the king of birds went back to his heaven, and all the birds returned to their common ways of life, and the lapwing was cured of his pride, not by opposition, but by a realization that he had succeeded through a power beyond his own.

It is pointed out then that the difficulties that men have to face and the faults that they have to overcome are countless as the drops in the ocean, but to him who has the pride of courage (which is only a misapplication of the knowledge that the true self within us has of his own omnipotence), the confidence to under-

take the impossible task of recovering his spiritual being, that has been sunk in the vast ocean of material existence, the powerful wings of the Deity are nigh.

### § 6.—The End of Man

A well-known catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?" and replies, "To glorify God and enjoy Him for ever." And, in the service, the congregation say, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord most high." There is a way in which one can think of our enjoying Him. In outward act and form, when these accord with His plan of spiritual progress for man, we glorify Him, but in our inward consciousness when we are true to our real selves we enjoy Him constantly and for ever. Our material bodies are little portions of the great material world established and sustained by God. In the same way our little portions of consciousness are small parts of His great consciousness. If we know, it is His knowing; if we feel, it is His feeling; if we will, it is His willing. But there is this difference between the units of matter that we use as bodies, and the units of consciousness that we are as souls—bodies are material objects that exclude one another; two of them cannot occupy the same space, and if they try to do so a collision ensues. But a greater consciousness always includes a lesser one—so we are one in Christ, and He is one in the Father. All pure human consciousness that is untainted by earthly desire or selfishness is Christ's great consciousness, even if it be in us. But as God is behind and in all matter and yet beyond it in consciousness, so is He behind and in all consciousness, and yet beyond it in His transcendent glory. To that also we belong, beyond the body that we use, beyond even the consciousness which He lends to us. Thus earth and heaven are full of His glory, but the glory is at last Himself. Sleep is possible because of that, but what is sleep to the ordinary man will be radiant and glorious life to him who has become perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect.

### § 7.—The Ideal Man

One form of contemplative practice in the church is that of dwelling upon the ideal man, the Master. It is advisable in this to begin with a concrete image, and to go through the three processes of concentration, meditation and contemplation with reference to that. He who cannot clearly think what the Master would be like and what he would do in the life and conditions of our day, in the

circumstances of our particular lives, has a poor conception of Him, and is likely to misunderstand His teaching. Therefore the devotee will do well to make a picture of Him, or to adopt one painted by somebody else, and make it perfectly familiar by repeated imagination.

Sometimes people find it difficult to visualize or imagine a full figure of that kind or even the features of a complete face. In that case the form may be built up gradually by a process of detailed concentration. First of all picture, let us say, one eye, and dwell upon that form till it is easy to recall. Then put it out of mind and picture the other eye in the same way, until it is familiar. Then make a picture of the two eyes together. Put that aside in turn, and give your exclusive attention to the form of a nose. When that is done join to it the pair of eyes. Next attend to the image of the mouth, and when that is made recall and join to it the eyes and nose. And so build up the entire face and head, and even the rest of the figure.

That figure may then be invested with all the virtues—courage, love, truth and all the rest, of which a list may be made from the Scriptures or other sources. One virtue may be taken each week or month, and dwelt upon as worked out in the life of the Master, in the familiar scenes of His story or imaginary ones of modern construction. And when that figure has thus been completed in body, emotions and mind, as the most perfect representative that you can make of the Master living in the world, it may become for you an object of contemplation through which your own evolution of character can advance at the swiftest possible pace.

Not the least of the virtues in this character, which is bound to reflect itself into ourselves, will be that of tolerance, for which the Liberal Catholic Church stands in this age of human conflict—a tolerance that is no mere patient endurance of others who differ in opinion and action from oneself, but a joyful recognition of superiority in the other man, in the good qualities that he has that are different from our own. No man can be at once poet and doctor, engineer, lawyer, artist, farmer, and the rest. Let the poet reverence the engineer and the doctor the lawyer and each the other among all of them. On such a foundation of mutual respect there will at last be formed a heavenly humanity, all of us living and acting as one Man, the fulfilment of Christ.

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# THE SCIENCE OF PRAYER

By ERNEST WOOD

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS:

			Page
Editor's Foreword	...	...	2
Chapter 1.—Varieties of Prayer	...	...	3
Chapter 2.—Imagination	...	...	13
Chapter 3.—Concentration	...	...	20
Chapter 4.—Meditation	...	...	27
Chapter 5.—Contemplation and Worship	...	...	34

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